contain bit mapped images, ASCII information about the bit mapped images, messages and

completed inquiries;

a plurality of customer service units that are remote from each of the plurality of regional

processing centers, each customer service unit having local data storage means of at least 500

megabytes of memory maintained at the customer service units, the local data storage means

includes means for storing the transaction data folders which contain the bit mapped images and

messages and completed inquiries;

means for transmitting the bit mapped images to the customer service units after

determining that the bit mapped images are not electronically stored at the customer service

units;

a wide area network connecting each regional processing center with at least one

customer service unit in a set associated with each of the plurality of regional processing centers

and connecting the plurality of regional processing centers together;

means for inputting data into each of the plurality of central data storage means from a

plurality of sources, the means including means for creating and inputting bit mapped images of

hard copy documents;

means for indexing input data in the central data storage means and creating the

transaction data folder related to the transaction, each of the transaction data folders containing a

unique identifier and at least one bit mapped image file of the at least one hard copy document

wherein the bit mapped image file of hard copy documents related to the transaction are stored

in the transaction data folder;

means for searching the data storage means in response to structured queries and

identifying records that match the queries;

graphic user interface means for allowing users to build the structured queries;

means for displaying data in the local data storage means so as to enable the transaction

data folder to be reviewed;

means for allowing the user to monitor another user's work-in-process at any time to

monitor the backlog and assigned levels of work and means for assigning monitoring privileges

to select users;

means for assigning the transaction data folder to the user based upon a predetermined

routing procedure;

means for creating a work queue for the users;

means for allowing the user to exchange database data;

means for maintaining the internal unique identifier to identify the transaction data folder

and document with an image transaction ID number;

means for retrieving identified data records from one of the plurality of central data

storage means in response to the structured queries and replicating data records retrieved from

the central data storage means in the local data storage means;

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gateway means located at each of the plurality of regional processing centers, for linking

the central data storage means with the local data storage means at each of the customer service

units and linking the wide area network to other networks;

wherein the gateway means is comprised of means for converting image data to and from

a stored image format;

wherein the transaction data folders can be accessed by customer service representatives

at any network location; and

wherein the plurality of customer service units are divided into a plurality of the sets, each

set containing at least one customer service unit, where each set of customer service units is

associated with one of the plurality of regional processing centers.

34.   (New) A process of trade records information management system for storing,

searching, and retrieving data pertaining to financial transactions comprising the steps of:

preprocessing inbound paper-based documents including scanning the inbound paper-

based documents;

indexing the inbound paper-based documents;

storing bit mapped images;

storing ASCII information about the bit mapped images;

storing messages and completed inquiries;

inputting data into a central data storage means from a plurality of sources;

indexing input data in the central data storage means and creating a transaction data

folder, the transaction data folder containing a unique identifier and a bit mapped image file

containing an image of at least one paper-based document, ASCII information about the at least

one paper-based document, messages and completed inquiries;

assigning the transaction data folder to a particular user based upon predetermined

routing rules;

creating a queue for the particular user, the queue containing documents and inquiries for

processing;

monitoring document work flow for backlog and assigned work levels;

connecting regional processing centers with a plurality of customer service units through

a wide area network linking the central data storage means with local data storage means at each

of the customer service units and linking the wide area network to other networks to allow data

communication between the data storage means and the networks;

searching the data storage means in response to structured queries and identifying records

that match the queries;

maintaining an internal unique key identifier to identify each of the transaction data folder

and documents with an image transaction ID number; and

transmitting the bit mapped images to the customer service unit, the customer service unit

having at least 500 megabytes of memory, wherein a determination is first made that the bit

mapped images are not locally stored at the customer service unit.

35.   (New) A method of managing documents and messages associated with a

financial transaction in a system comprising:

scanning at least one paper document associated with the financial transaction to generate

at least one bit mapped image of the at least one paper document at a first site;

transmitting the at least one bit mapped image to a first regional processing center;

retrieving the at least one bit mapped image at a local trade records information

management system from the first regional processing center after determining that the at least

one bit mapped image is not electronically stored at the local trade records information

management system;

indexing the at least one bit mapped image at the local trade records information

management system;

creating a first transaction folder image at the local trade records information

management system wherein the first transaction folder contains information related to the

financial transaction including the at least one bit mapped image and messages;

storing the first transaction folder at both the local trade records information management

system and the first regional processing center; and

retrieving information within the first transaction folder from either the first regional

processing center or the local trade records information management system;

wherein a user may access the first transaction folder at the local trade management

information system when the regional processing center is off-line.

36.   (New) The method of managing documents and messages associated with the

financial transaction in the system of claim 35, wherein the user may access information within

the first transaction folder stored at the regional processing center directly.

37.   (New) The method of managing documents and messages associated with the

financial transaction in the system of claim 35, wherein the user may transfer the bit mapped

image in the first transaction folder into a second transaction folder.

38.   (New) The method of managing documents and messages associated with the

financial transaction in the system of claim 35, wherein storing of the first transaction folder at

the regional processing center occurs at night and the storing of the first transaction folder at the

local trade records information management system occurs during the day.

39.   (New) The method of managing documents and messages associated with the

financial transaction in the system of claim 35 comprising:

connecting the first regional processor center with a second regional processor center

such that a second remote site can access the first transaction folder stored in the first regional

processor center via the second regional processor center.

40.   (New) The method of managing documents and messages associated with the

financial transaction in the system of claim 35, wherein any data input into the system by the first

site must be routed to the local trade records information management system in order to be

placed into the first transaction folder.

41.   (New) The method of managing documents and messages associated with the

financial transaction in the system of claim 36, wherein the first transaction folder is a new

transaction folder created by the local trade records information management system.

42.   (New) The method of managing documents and messages associated with the

financial transaction in the system of claim 36, wherein the first transaction folder is a pre-

existing transaction folder.

43.   (New) The method of managing documents and messages associated with the

financial transaction in the system of claim 36, wherein the information related to the financial

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transaction which is stored within the first transaction folder is further comprised of inbound fax

messages.